













DANCING WITH HELEN MOLLER





## TO THE READER

### *An Invitation from the Author.*

*Throughout the text of this book I have used the impersonal pronoun, "we," in proper acknowledgment of the fact that the basic ideas expressed therein are already accepted by a large number of the healthiest, the happiest and the most contented inhabitants of this and other countries. They are of all ages, from six and seven years up to sixty and seventy. They are not all "Greek Dancers," by any means; yet, owing to the natural and wholesome lives they live, in common with us who dance with the Arcadians, doubtless some of them will feel the impulse to celebrate their hundredth birthday in that way.*

*It is possible that you are one of this constantly increasing multitude of the healthy, the happy and the contented; if not, you are cordially invited to join us; not necessarily in our dancing—although that is the best and most efficacious way—but as an active enemy of all that is false and ugly and a practicing advocate of whatever enters our lives that is true and beautiful.*



*The Temple,*

*New York,*

*New Years Day,*

*1918.*

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**HIS book, "Dancing with Helen Moller," is a new message of beauty to modern civilization. Besides attempting to lay the foundation for a new movement of terpsichory, she appears as a priestess of an ancient yet neglected truth: the return to nature, spontaneity, simplicity, health, grace and happiness by means of dancing. In doing so she goes wisely back to the fundamental principles which are the bases of all folk-arts, particularly of the folk-dances, and the ancient Greek dances.

As she so eloquently expresses in her series of philosophical essays on the subject, her "dancing is Greek plus American adaptability and creativeness." We find that no Athenian festivals ever were celebrated without dancing. The Pythian, Marathon, Olympic and all other great national games opened and ended with dancing. The designs with which the gods used to adorn the shields of heroes represented the dances contrived by Daedalus for fair-haired Ariadne. Socrates danced with Aspasia and Aristides danced at a banquet given by Dionysius of Syracuse. Thus the Greeks danced always and everywhere. They danced in the temples, in the woods and in the fields. Every social or family event, birth, marriage, and death,

gave occasion for a dance. Theseus celebrated his victory over the Minotaur with dances. Apollo dictated choreographic laws through the mouths of his priestesses.

The best Greek dancers came from the Arcadians. The main aim of the Arcadian dancers was to contrive the most perfect plastic grace in the various poses of the human body, and in this, classic sculpture was their ideal. It is said that the divine sculpture of Greece was inspired by the high standard of national choreography. Dancing in Greece was performed by men and women alike. In some of these dances they wore a loose garment, keeping their arms and legs bare, in others they danced perfectly naked. Through dancing the Greeks developed such beautiful bodies that they disliked to hide their plastic lines with any garments, therefore they preferred to appear naked, and more so in the temples and theatres than in their homes or in society. The fact that Greek sculpture is mainly nude can be attributed not so much to any abstract art ideals as to the actual custom of the time.

Helen Moller's ideal in dancing has been the same that actuated Rodin in his immortal works when he said: "To produce good sculpture it is not necessary to copy the works of Greece; it is necessary first of all to regard the works of nature, and to see in those of the classics only the method by which they have interpreted nature." Helen Moller says: "I am by no means copying the dancing of Greece. I am only learning from the ancient Greek art to regard the essential laws of symmetry and rhythm, Space and Time in nature. The ideal of my art is the

simple, majestic image of nature in all its simplicity and grace. Not tricky acrobatics, spinning whirls and spectacular technique, but soft, spontaneous expressions of Mother Earth have inspired my dancing."

In her efforts to inspire universal love of dancing, Helen Moller follows the fundamentals of all the folk-dances. All folk-dances have their peculiar psychology which varies according to racial temperament, climate and other conditions. Races which are notable for quickness of intelligence display similar racial characteristics in their folk-dances. For instance, we see vivacity and love of orderly design in the French, pathos and pugnacity in the Irish, sentimental reflectiveness in the Germans, spasmodic vehemence in the Hungarians, the passion of the Slavs, etc. The vigorous races of Northern Europe in their damp and cold climate developed dancing as a special function of the legs. The Scandinavian folk-dances betray more heavy and massive movements, while those of Spain, Italy and France give an impression of romantic grace, coquettish agility and fire. The folk-dances of the Cossacks are usually violent and acrobatic, as is their life. Energy and dreaminess, fire or coolness and a multitude of other racial qualities assert themselves automatically in a folk-dance. In the Far East, in Japan, Java, China and India, dancing consists in movements of the hands and the fingers alone.

As with all other arts, thus with the art of dancing: we have wandered far away from the vigor of naturalness. We have neglected the subjective issues of spontaneity,

dynamics and directness of expression in favor of the objective issues of form, polish and cleverness. Academic minds are wont to put a stamp of amateurishness on most of the attempts which cannot be measured with the scales of a given school with its technical rules. Dancing created upon the principles of folk-lore may seem uneven and amateurish at the first glance, yet nature and human life are also thus; but thank Heaven, they are not artificial and sophisticated.

The fundamental purpose of Helen Moller's dancing is to create beauties that emanate, not from a certain school or method, but directly from the soul of the individual. Her ideal is to create life from life. In order to accomplish this task she goes back to the rhythmic, plastic and emotional traditions of ancient Greek dancing, to the folk-dances, the metaphysical and physiological laws of life and nature. Democracy in dancing is her watchword; subjective individualism her supreme aim. Her tendency is not to seek any solution of the art of dancing in the arbitrary rules of certain masters but in the very heart, in the joys and sorrows of the common people. In avoiding artificialities, she has put into her system of dancing all the idiomatic peculiarities of an individual without polishing out of it the vigor of naturalness.

To produce in her dancing a direct expression of living Time and Space, is what Helen Moller is aiming at. "Space and Time are the fundamental conditions of all material existence—and for that same reason the inevitable conditions of all material manifestation of man



are within the limits of his earthly being," wrote Prince S. Volkhonsky in his masterly book on the ballet. If we agree that art is the highest manifestation of order in matter, and order in its essence nothing but division of space and time, we shall understand the fulness of artistic satisfaction which man must feel when both his organs of perfection, eye and ear, convey to him not only each separate enjoyment, but the enjoyment of fusion; when all his aesthetic functions are awakened in him, not separately but collectively, in one unique impression: the visible rhythm penetrated by the audible simple idea, the audible realized in the visible, and both united in movement. The combination of the spacial order with the temporal is that to which Helen Moller aspires. And when this combination is accomplished, and still more, when it is animated with expression of images, then no chord of human impressionability is left untouched, no category of human existence is neglected; space and time are filled with beauty, the whole man is but one aesthetic perception.

The fundamental elements which characterize the vigor and spontaneity of all folk-dances are derived from rhythm. Rhythm is that part of music which compels a listener to join with, mimic, body, hands and feet. Rhythm is also evidently the very essential of nature and human life, as not only rain drops rhythmically, but also our hearts beat rhythmically. Step, the most elemental form of expression of rhythm, is the secondary foundation of the dance. Modern musicians and dancers, however,

have been showing a tendency to ignore rhythm and its essentials of motion by hiding it carefully away in various sophistications and gymnastics. Pure unsophisticated rhythm belongs to the folk-songs and folk-dances, the most majestic masterpieces of humanity. In order to solve this matter, and rid the modern mind from the spell of sophisticated technicians, Helen Moller has launched her system of dancing by keeping in view the same natural principles that actuated our ancestors in devising their folk-dances,—that gave immortality to the dancing, no less than the sculpture, of ancient Greece.

IVAN NARODNY



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**D**ANCING: A STATE OF MIND  
ACTING UPON THE EMO-  
TIONS AND PRODUCING  
PHYSICAL EXPRESSION



The unfolding leap, illustrating the important principle of open free unaffected management of the entire body even in moments of muscular stress.

## I

### *The Classic Ideal—and Ours*

**L**ET us begin with an intelligent definition. The subject discussed in these pages has two general aspects: Dancing, and the Art of the Dance. Nowadays the Art of the Dance, like Opera and the Drama, is confined almost exclusively to the stage; whereas to-day, and from the beginning, Dancing is a natural gift provided for the pleasure and benefit of all humanity.

In ancient times, when human nature was naive, its natural emotions unrepressed and its actions characterized by truth and sincerity, dancing reached a state of purity, grace and dignity of which the sophisticated world of to-day knows comparatively nothing. It was artless, in the sense of lacking refined technique; but it was truthful; it faithfully expressed emotion, and therein lay its surpassing beauty. Because it was healthful, it was moral; being artless, its enjoyment was universal—everybody danced. Joyous emotions being Nature's first Call to the Dance, and such emotions reacting most

Expressing wistful expectation—the hands in an upward receptive gesture and the countenance as of hope for some yearned-for gift from above.







*The Classic Ideal—and Ours*

profoundly to the influence of the green earth under the blue sky, dancing was mainly an open air diversion. Fashion had not yet attempted the destruction of the strong and graceful human form by loading it down and compressing it with fantastic and unnecessary clothing. Doctors and medicine, finding no place in the Arcadian scheme of existence, were misfortunes yet to be invented. This was Dancing in its Golden Age—an ideal, worthy and entirely practicable which, fortunately with some success, we are endeavoring to restore.

In a score of thick volumes you may find the history of the Art of the Dance set forth with the most conscientious attention to detail—and very little of value about Dancing, in the true sense of the word. You may learn from those volumes that dancing is the most ancient of the arts; that its birth was coincident with the birth of religion; that the primitive tribes of every land danced; that all savages still dance, and that every stage of civilization has been marked by its own particular variation upon the ancient dance theme, with the people of every nation exploiting national dances of their own invention, while the stage has added all its traditional resources of exaggeration and spectacularization. Thus you may learn virtually all there is to be learned about *dances*—and miss pretty nearly the whole idea of Dancing.

Such knowledge is not to be despised. A faithful history of the dance is the virtual equivalent of a social

**Atalanta.** Depicting the classical moment of the most intense physical and mental concentration upon two opposing motives—to win the race, yet pause to seize the prize.





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history of the world, reflecting ethics, the graphic and plastic arts, the customs, manners and costumes in all countries and in each successive stage of civilization. All this material is of special and legitimate value to the stage, which, in these times, exercises a function of portrayal that is universal in its scope. Probably never before was the daily life of the people more closely associated with the atmosphere of the theatre. Thus, more than ever, every manifestation of decadence or of progress in human affairs must, sooner or later, find itself recorded in stage productions. More and more fully the stage is recording our progress in restoring the Arcadian natural grace and beauty of the dance. It invites us who dance as dancing ought to be, for our own joy and benefit, to make a public diversion of what is our pleasure and our duty to ourselves. And this is as it should be. It will contribute new-old beauties to the Art of the Dance, and it will help to convince the multitude that what they are witnessing as a stage performance is really what they themselves should be doing every day of their lives!

Because there existed just one country and one age in which simple beauty and high serenity of mind were exalted above all else, we are popularly called, "Greek Dancers." Let us try to merit that designation. What modern sculptor would not die content in the knowledge that his epitaph would proclaim, "Here lies another Phidias"? In our time we are ages distant from that living spirit. How quickly it vanished from the

Unfolding, as though giving or about to receive—an idea of petals opening to exchange the flower's perfume for the warmth of the sun's rays.







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world! Not even Michael Angelo could grasp it. "His vision is of man burdened and disquieted, oppressed by mysteries which he cannot penetrate, writhing in conflict with forces too great for his control. In the sculptures of the Greeks, on the other hand, man is calm and untroubled—and the gods, we must remember, are but man exalted and made immortal. Strength, skill, wisdom, temperance and modesty are implied in his attitude of quiet and balanced grace. For him life as he knows it is good and fair. His reckoning squares itself on earth and calls for no celestial adjustment hereafter."\*

The smug, squeamish, hypocritical Victorian Age produced poets and painters who sickened and died of nostalgia for its antithesis, the Age of Pericles. A warrior—Lord Elgin—committed the crime of ravishing the Parthenon of its chief sculptured glories for respectable sepulture in the British Museum. Wordsworth, in an hour of true poetic vision, penned a sonnet:

The world is too much with us; late and soon  
Getting and spending, we waste our powers;  
Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!  
The sea that bares her bosom to the moon,  
The winds that will be howling at all hours,  
And are upgathered now like sleeping flowers,  
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;  
It moves us not.—Great God, I'd rather be  
A Pagan suckled on a creed outworn,  
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;  
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,  
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

\* John Warrack, from his introduction to "Greek Sculpture."

An adaptation of the classic idea of Pan—three manifestations emphasizing the gay and mischievous attributes of that minor deity of the Arcadian woodland.





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Yes, the coveted spirit is Greek. But is that spirit forever lost because modern hands fail to reproduce it in marble? Our bodies are in no way different from theirs. In youth our minds are plastic; let us encourage them to so act upon our emotions that there will be true beauty in our dancing.

In America our prospects are brighter than anywhere elsewhere else in the world. The great mass of this country's population is unspoiled by the traditions of arts that have become decadent. Our "melting pot" is mingling the most vital blood of every enlightened race under the sun, thus obliterating national traits discovered to be disadvantageous and creating a new people devoid of belittling prejudices, fresh, strong and original in its creative impulses. What we have already accomplished in our reform of dancing has directed to this country the hopes and expectations of the connoisseurs and critical authorities of Europe. Especially with respect to dancing and music among the fine arts they seem to rely upon us for fresh, regenerative impulses.

Of course, in view of their source, these expectations concern dancing as an art for public representation. That is inevitable. From this viewpoint, Ivan Narodny, in a philosophical chapter in his *History of the Dance*, writes: "The future of the art of dancing belongs to America, the country of cosmic ideals. The past belongs to the aristocratic ideals, in which the Russian ballet reached the climax. The French were the found-

Different individual reactions to the same sense of calamity—one erect as though petrified, the other crushed by despair; neither imitative, but each creative.







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ers of aristocratic choreography; the Russians transformed it into an aristocratic dramatic art; to the Americans belongs the attempt at a democratic school.” \*

When we realize that expressions of this kind are evoked by admiration of our achievements toward restoring the ancient Greek ideal of dancing we must feel especially encouraged; for, while our great object is to add something of permanent value to the beauty and joy of human life, to have our accomplishment accepted as a worthy foundation upon which to build an entire art structure that shall be new and original is the best possible assurance that we are on a firm footing, and in accord with the spirit of our time and our country.

We have one most decided advantage over the time and country of our model; we are near the beginning of our national existence and of our creative impulse, while they, having reached the summit, were trembling on the verge of decadence. Less than two centuries later, as Grecian ceramic art shows, the lofty deities of their pantheon were being forgotten in favor of the gods of disorder. Aphrodite, in her most carnal aspect, and vine-wreathed Dionysos were dissipating the serene dignity and grace wrought by the power of Pallas Athene, Hermes, Diana. Potter's clay largely sup-

\* Narodny's argument on this point proceeds: "The chief characteristics of the American mind are to condense expressions and ideas into their shortest forms. This is most evident in the syncopated style of its music, in its language and in its architecture. Like the American ragtime tune, an American skyscraper is the result of an impressionistic imagination. Both are crude in their present form, yet they speak a language of an unethnographic race and form the foundation of a new art.

"Instead of having a floating, graceful and, so to speak, a horizontal

Children are quick to feel the impulse to rise upon the ball of the foot even when that limb is sustaining the body's entire weight—one of the principal requisites of Greek dancing.





## *The Classic Ideal—and Ours*

planted marble as material upon which the record of human life was graven. The little clay dancing figures of Tanagra, in the Fourth Century B. C., are charming, but they tell only too plainly the story of moral and spiritual degeneration, which, at the beginning of the Christian era, had placed the Golden Age in total eclipse.

In our country to-day the tendencies are exactly the reverse. We are rapidly ridding ourselves of our old-world heritage of drunkenness, profligacy and phariseeism. With respect to drink we are becoming temperate almost to the point of abstention; over-eating is entirely out of fashion; many of our wealthiest families set examples of simple living, discouraging arrogant display, idleness and class distinctions. All our tendencies are toward nobler ideals. Psychologically, we are in a most fortunate position to begin—with our dancing, at least—where the Arcadians left off.

It would be absurd for us to believe that we are capable of no more than copying the Arcadians. As a matter of fact we are temperamentally incapable of slavishly copying from any model. Our ancient Greek dancing is, and will continue to be, Greek plus American

tendency like the aesthetic images of the Old World, American beauty is dynamic, impressionistic and denies every tradition. The underlying motives of such a tendency are not democratic but cosmic. While a nationalistic art is always based upon something traditional, something that belongs to the past evolution of a race, cosmic art strives to unite the emotions of all humanity. The task of the latter is much more difficult. It requires a universal mind to grasp what appeals to the whole world. It requires a Titanic genius to condense the aesthetic images so that in their shortest form they may say what the others would in a roundabout way. This gives to beauty a dynamic vigor and makes it so much more universal than the art of any age or nation could be."

### *The Classic Ideal—and Ours*

adaptability and creativeness; human nature has not stood quite still for twenty-five centuries. Eventually, upon our serenely pure and beautiful model we shall be able to build forms and movements that will make our dance really our own, and our lives the fuller and happier because of it.

What gives greater satisfaction than the certainty of being able always to give true expression to charming thoughts and swaying emotions? The speaking eye, the mirror-like, plastic countenance and the gracefully responsive body and limbs, form an instrument of interpretation capable of imaging forth the subtlest shade of meaning.

When numbers of us together are practising our variations upon the classic dance methods of interpreting musical themes, the spectator is apt to marvel at the diversity of individual expression. There are no hackneyed movements; in each individual case the response of the living interpretative instrument is original and spontaneous. And the familiar spectator's wonder turns to amazement on observing that however individual is each separate interpretation, all, nevertheless, are fused spontaneously into one mass interpretation that is far more aesthetic and truthful than is possible by means of artificial, prearranged figures, as in the conventional ballet.



**C**LOTHES: FASHION'S DIS-  
TORTION OF DRAPERIES  
WHICH SUFFICE FOR  
MODESTY AND COMFORT

Graceful swaying of the erect body produced in advancing by a slight crossing of the feet, with uplifted arms in harmonious management of draperies.

## II

### *The Tyranny of Clothes*

**F**OR more than twenty centuries dancing has suffered martyrdom to clothes. Clothes, as distinguished from robes, draperies sufficient for modesty and comfort, are an arbitrary, artificial creation expressing only vanity and defying nearly every attribute of nature and beauty. Worse yet, when we reflect we realize that Fashion, the modern Goddess, has undone all that was accomplished by the Olympian Goddess of Health—compressing and distorting the body and interfering disastrously with the important functions of the skin. Nature, in clothing the lower animals never has done this; even her work of ornamentation has ever been harmless from the health standpoint; nor can it be charged to vanity, for we know that the gorgeous tail of the peacock and the majestic mane of the lion serve the single purpose of attracting the female.

History shows us quite plainly that the ideal of human vigor and grace reached its zenith in Greece in the Fifth Century B. C. The sculptured remains of that pe-

Example of a very young dancer unconsciously coordinating movements of arms and torso with remarkably true and forceful expression of countenance.





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riod prove to us that clothes had not yet been invented. That is one of several reasons why Greek sculpture of the Fifth Century remains unsurpassed. We have only to compare any figure of a Parthenon frieze with the best sculptured representation of human activity in our own time to be instantly aware of the woful decadence not only of vigor and grace, but of beauty; and to be able to fix the whole responsibility upon clothes. All competent sculptors, painters and critics agree upon this: "Nothing is more characteristic of the Greeks, nothing better illustrates their quickness to seize on the profound beauty which may transfigure common and familiar things, than their use of drapery. In drapery the sculptor saw not merely the appropriate clothing of the model, to be disposed as gracefully and tellingly as possible, but a material out of which he might weave a web of magical beauty, responsive to the activity of repose of the figure, and forming an emotional commentary on its attitude or movement. It was a filmy envelope enabling him to reveal the form in its structural meaning and beauty of line, and, again, to lose it in simple spaces or behind vigorous folds of the gathered material. Thus it supplied his art with an element of mystery, and gave him a new power of leading the eye of the spectator along an enchanting course of expectation and surprise." \*

Those were the draperies ordinarily worn by the Greeks, and in which they danced. We, in our restora-

\* Quoted from John Warrack's introduction to "Greek Sculpture."

The perfection of self-consciousness wholly obliterated. Although suddenly and completely undraped, the child's reaction to the emotion of expectant wonder is absolute.



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tion of the Greek dance, model all our draperies upon them. Athenaeus, most faithful chronicler of Greek social life, tells us that the early sculpture is "a record of dancing." We are, therefore, not only restoring Greek dancing but translating the noblest sculpture into movement—bringing its most beautiful and charming figures to life.

The decadence of sculpture and of dancing have been coincident—and clothes are responsible. Rome was the original inventor of clothes. Rome fell, but Fashion went on her way increasingly triumphant, thriving even in the Dark Ages when humanity touched the bottom of spiritual and moral degradation. Fashion, clothes, seized upon the *Renaissance*, imposing her glittering artifices and thus obstructing the way to a restoration of true beauty and vigor. The Eighteenth Century witnessed the apotheosis of Fashion—which the French Revolution obscured but failed to transform into a Calvary. The train of the wedding dress of Frederick the Great's daughter "was borne by six maids of honor, who, on account of the great weight of the precious stones with which it was garnished, had two pages to assist them. The total weight of the bridal attire is said to have been nearly a hundred pounds." \*

Fashion's hold upon the men was not less firm. Madame de Sevigne tells of the wedding toilet of the Prince de Conde: "The whole court was witness of the

\* Grace Rhys, in *Modes and Manners of the Nineteenth Century*.

A playful Spring movement—flowers and ribbons, and lightness of movement which seems almost to defy the force of gravitation. The small Tanagra figures suggest the same spirit.





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ceremony, and Madame de Langeron, seizing the moment when he had his paws crossed like a lion, slipped upon him a waistcoat with diamond buttons. A *valet de chambre* frizzed him, powdered him. His suit was inestimably lovely; it was embroidered in very large diamonds, following the lines of a black pattern on a straw-colored velvet ground." Etc., etc.

Both sexes were corseted to the point of suffocation. Dancing? Clothes pretended to dance—their wearers couldn't; in the American slang of to-day, they were dead from the hips up—yes, and ought to have been buried all over!

We are now not much better off. Fashion still has us in her grip. That grip is somewhat relaxed, however, and it is to be hoped that our restoration of dancing as it is embalmed in Greek sculpture will apply the *coup de grace*, with adequate and beautiful draperies forever supplanting clothes.

In this connection one thing is always to be remembered: The scantiest of draperies are more modest than any clothes. Clothes are suggestive, and impure thoughts provoke impure manners. All our dancing modeled upon the Greek effects an illusion of absolute beauty so profound that bareness of feet and limbs occasionally escaping their drapings makes no separate appeal of any kind. As for clothes, it will be sufficient to quote Herrick, amorous poet of clothes' most triumphant period:

The graceful management of draperies is an important requisite in Greek dancing. When the robe is voluminous, as in this instance, its manipulation demands considerable skill.







## *The Tyranny of Clothes*

A sweet disorder in the dress  
Kindles in clothes a wantonness.  
A winning wave, deserving note,  
In the tempestuous petticoat;  
A careless shoestring, in whose tie  
I see a wild civility,—  
Do more bewitch me than when art  
Is too precise in every part.

We have, fortunately, from other sources unquestioned authority to support our contention from the dancer's viewpoint that the tyranny of clothes, of fashion, amounts to a denial of our vaunted Twentieth Century civilization. From nearly every other form of tyranny we have escaped. Never before was the average human being throughout the world so nearly free from autocratic control, or so able to make intelligent personal use of the fruits of progress in science. Yet, curiously enough, while the whole world is making a fetish of hygiene, hygiene's arch enemy—the tyrant of conventional clothing—continues to sit securely upon his throne.

Every properly trained athlete understands the inconsistency of our use of conventional clothes. All capable physical instructors are missionaries for radical clothing reform. One of the most celebrated of these—Lieutenant Mueller, of the Danish Army—vies with the most uncompromising Greek dancer in reprobation of “the garb of civilization.” In his “Fresh Air Book” he writes:

“What beautiful skins the ancient Greeks possessed, acquired by constant practice, body exercises,

A playful dance interpretation in which the hands and the expression of countenance are especially important. The small Tanagra figure portrays much the same spirit in different action.





## *The Tyranny of Clothes*

which they performed without clothes in the open air, under a blazing sun! Their skins were of a golden-brown color, like bronze, and were as soft as velvet, but at the same time quite inured to all climatic conditions. That the skin is so inured does not mean that it is hard, but rather that it possesses the faculty of transmitting the warmth and coolness, dryness and moisture, and the different chemical and electric influences, so that these, instead of harming or weakening the body, invigorate and preserve its vitality. While the skin of the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet becomes hard and corny through constant use, the skin of the rest of the body has this entirely opposite peculiarity, that the more it is rubbed and exposed to the sun and the wind the softer it becomes. We who live in northern cities can make our skins as healthy and fine as those of the old Greeks, if we only do, as they did." \*

We are entitled to remark here that we who dance as dancing ought to be, in this sense at least, actually do as the old Greeks did. Our heads and feet are bare; our

\* In the same book Lieutenant Mueller presents these pertinent physiological facts: "Being naked, with a goodly current of cold or dry air playing on the body, the exudation from the pores does not always take the form of sweat, but sometimes that of gas. This kind of steam can be easily observed by standing in the bright sunshine on a cold day, and watching the outline of one's own figure, when little waves of shadow, like the dancing hot air above a flame, will be seen to rise upward quickly and continually. The skin is seen exhaling carbolic acid, steam, and a number of other poisonous matters, while it absorbs in the meantime the oxygen of the air. Everybody will understand that any check to this respiration of the skin, by diet or by thick apparel, prevents the free exchange of poisonous for pure gases, and, therefore, is injurious to health. It also proves that a skin that can breathe freely through its pores, and is accustomed to air-baths, and other kinds of gymnastics for the skin, has special faculties for cleansing and improving the blood, and healthy blood lays the foundation of a vigorous and fatigue-resisting organism."

Here the dancer, erect and recumbent, realizes in living movement the classic sculptor's sense of the aesthetic value of simple draperies.







## *The Tyranny of Clothes*

bodies and limbs are draped only for modesty and grace; our skins are soft, healthy and fine. If we fall short of their state of physical perfection, doubtless the cause lies in the number of hours out of the twenty-four during which the social conventions of ordinary life compel us to confine and burden our bodies with unnecessary and unhygienic clothing.

Fashion, in modern times, is responsible for the worst possible crime against health and grace in its tyrannical treatment of our feet. The natural human foot not only is beautifully formed but is a marvel of strength and elasticity. It easily bears up the whole weight of the body, while, in the exercise of walking and running, the feet perform more work than any other member. Their structure is necessarily complex—a finely organized, shapely, mass of jointed bones, powerful muscles, ligaments, tendons, and sensitive nerves, with a circulatory system which depends for its efficiency upon freedom of movement of every part. Given this advantage, the ordinary exercise of the feet in bearing up the whole body and carrying it about from place to place maintains them in a state of symmetry and health. Dancing naturally in the bare feet, as we do, contributes such extra vitality that the entire body benefits.

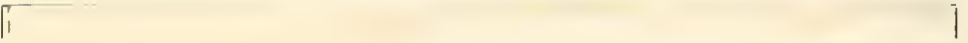
Whatever confines and burdens our bodies, preventing the natural movements of our limbs and inclining us from that proudly upright position which distinguishes us most obviously from the lower animals, tends

## *The Tyranny of Clothes*

to limit the attribute of spirituality which we share with divinity. In our conventional harness of clothes we are not much better off than the poet's "man with a hoe," aptly described as, "brother to the ox." When in that harness one's gaze droops from the sky to the earth; he cannot escape his sense of being earth-born; spiritual ideals fade away, crowded out by gross materiality.

Unburdened by any such harness, the Greek dancer seems to deny for herself more than a casual and convenient connection with the earth. Her bare feet do not sink into it under the weight of her body. Indeed, her body appears to have no weight. Her feet lightly spurn the earth and her body soars. She is more of the air than of the earth—not only in appearance to the ordinary observer but in her own sense of delightful buoyancy. She is realizing in her conscious hours that familiar dream sensation of freedom from the earth's attraction in which the body seems to float through the atmosphere propelled by an occasional slight thrust of the foot against the ground. The almost universal experience of this soaring dream sensation seems to bear out the theory that dreams, in their fantastic way, fulfil, and are actuated by, desires of the conscious being; for, what human desire is more nearly universal than the desire for complete personal independence, of which independence of the earth's support would represent its most perfect realization?

**C**LASSIC SCULPTURE: THE  
IMPERISHABLE IDEAL EM-  
BODIMENT OF THOUGHT  
AND EMOTION



Caryatid of the Erechtheum (British Museum). The sculptured classic Greek ideal of serene poise and balance of the whole figure. Note that nearly the entire weight of the body and its burden is borne on one foot.

### III

## *Our Debt to Classic Sculpture*

**E**ARLY Greek sculpture, wrote Athenaeus, is a record of dancing. Even at this distance of twenty-five centuries, with only remnants of the record preserved to us, we discern truth in the statement and can understand the cause that went before the fact. The Greeks adored the human form, and most of all in graceful and vigorous action. Their dancing, more than any other motive for physical expression, combined these qualities. It did more than that. Lucian writes: "In this art the functions of mind and body are united. It exercises the limbs and at the same time employs the understanding; for in it nothing is done without wisdom and reason." Referring to emotional interpretations in the Greek dance, Xenophon says: "Nothing of the body should be idle; the neck, limbs and hands must all be made use of." When Demetrius witnessed a dancer, without any musical accompaniment, represent one of the old myths of the gods he cried out: "I not only see all you do, but even hear it also; for your hands seem to speak to me!"

Classic perfection of repose, with one limb bearing the body's weight while the other, with the knee flexed, preserves balance, is one of the Greek dancer's earliest achievements.







## *Our Debt to Classic Sculpture*

Dimly, perhaps, but still plainly enough to convince us of their truth, all these testimonies are corroborated in what is preserved to us of the sculpture of that period. We who are earnest in our efforts to replace dancing upon its ancient foundation of truth and beauty should therefore give constant study to the sculptures which so faithfully portray it. A modern close student of the subject—John Warrack—has well written: “It would be difficult to overestimate the value of dancing of so highly intellectualized a type in educating a nation in the elements of sculpture. The dancer had to reproduce, with little if any external aid, the whole range of human thought and feeling in terms of bodily gesture and movement, and his art was closely followed and criticized by a crowd of keenly discriminating spectators, who condemned any departure from the severest artistic seemliness and restraint. His physical conformation, his fairness of proportion and his condition had to come up to the most exacting standards. The art of rhythmic balance and that perfect co-operation of the muscles which results in graceful and harmonious movements had to be studied and acquired under masters versed in the Greek tradition. And all this beauty of form and movement was to be, not an end in itself, but a medium through which an intellectual and poetic appreciation of Greek legend was to find expression.”

Nothing tangible which now exists upon the face of the earth except the sculpture of the age of Myron,

A most charming unstudied attitude enhanced by the simple drapery effect. The figure is an early Roman copy of a classic Greek original, from the Giustiniani Collection.





## *Our Debt to Classic Sculpture*

Phidias and Polyclitus can interpret for us the passionate and exalted sense of the beauty of form which was the heart of the life of the ancient Greeks. It is a beauty realized by no other people, before or since. It "has an immortal virtue, a flame-like efficacy for the spirit, which cold erudition cannot supply"; and if that flame be but once kindled it is inevitable that we should be led straight back to those who knew what they sought. They sought and found tranquillity, without which there is no beauty; and, learning to feel it, they were able to reproduce it in marble—an inheritance for us, who *feel* tranquillity so slightly and so sorely need its inspiration! So we know that man once, in one country and one period, was confident, undismayed, always equal to his task. "Even in the scenes of combat so frequent on pediment or frieze, he gives or receives the death-wound with the same gallant grace, neither arrogant in victory nor dishonest by defeat."

Although these priceless sculptures are not accessible to the average student, photographs of them are widely distributed. These indicate at once "how tranquil and unoppressed by their burden are the Caryatids of the Erechtheum, those serene maidens who bear on their heads the solid marble entablature!" Warrack is writing here, and what he writes is food for thought for every dancer: "The perfection of repose which characterizes most of the free single-figure statues which have come down to us is even more striking. We may

Bearing the bowl of wine—attitude, countenance, position of the other hand and arm, all express the spirit that goes with the conception of the vintage.

## *Our Debt to Classic Sculpture*

almost reduce its secret to a formula. Unlike modern work, where, especially among northern races, the weight is apt to be borne by both feet, thus suggesting a disturbance of balance, if not actual motion, the Greek figure is supported by one only, while the other limb is relaxed, and the foot merely rests on the ground to secure stability.\* One hip thus drops lower than the other, and this is balanced by an opposite inclination of the line of the two shoulders. If the right hip is up, the right shoulder is down; if the left hip rises, the left shoulder falls. As a natural sequel, the line of the knees follows that of the hips, while the ankles tend to revert to the line of the shoulders."

Without due recognition of these principles no dancer can express tranquillity in beauty. Having mastered them, she, or he, will naturally co-ordinate the relations of the lines of the shoulders, the hips, the knees, and the ankles respectively as to their backward or forward inclination in a horizontal plane. Analyses of this sort will lead the dancer far towards the appreciation of the subtleties of Greek balance, acquired in practice of the dance and recorded in sculpture.

Among the sculptures, of which replicas and photographs are accessible to everybody and which are use-

\* It will be observed that throughout the text of these essays dealing with the fundamentals of the art which she teaches as well as practices, the author exercises a restraint quite out of the ordinary. Here, for example, she chooses to quote an art critic on a principle of technique which is demonstrated in the work of her youngest pupils trained in the New York City Temple of her school, or in its sylvan summer annex, "Wood Nymphs." It may interest the reader, by way of illustration, to compare the Caryatid reproduced for the frontispiece of this section with the figure of the young pupil in the plate next following.—Ed.

The undraped torso of every dancer who is faithful to the classic model exhibits this hygienic raising of the chest which reduces the abdomen by sustaining the internal organs in their proper position.



## *Our Debt to Classic Sculpture*

ful for the constant study of dancers, are: Venus of Melos (Louvre); Antinous (Vatican, Rome); Dance of Nymphs in a Grotto of Pan (British Museum, from Athens); Marble Relief of a Dancer (Kgl. Museum, Berlin); Orpheus, Eurydice, and Hermes (Naples); Phigaleian Frieze or Greeks and Amazons (British Museum); Victory Binding Sandal (Acropolis Museum, Athens).

At this point it seems desirable to define a boundary beyond which our study of classic Greek sculpture ceases to be useful in aiding us to restore the spirit of dancing of that period. As we do not rely for our achievement upon any system of mechanical technique, the real value of the influence exerted by these sculptures ends where it has succeeded in transporting us, in our minds and emotions, back to Arcady. When we can mentally visualize Greece in her Golden Age, and have entered into the spirit which made the Arcadians what they were, then we can go on and freely express ourselves as they did; and, upon that foundation, proceed to adapt and originate in accordance with our native gifts and the added impulses belonging to our own age.

Our first object is to recreate and reinhabit Arcady, because we need a definite ideal that satisfies our aesthetic sense. Where has there existed another such ideal? Nowhere in the Orient in any period, for the reason that the Oriental mind and ours are at opposite poles. Our sagas of the West do not reveal anything of the kind, for in their heroes and heroines the essential quality of

Votive incense, as from a novice to the Priestess of the Temple—an attitude of graceful humility combined with pride in serving.





## *Our Debt to Classic Sculpture*

serenity was wholly absent. Our fairy lore deals with the supernatural, the fantastic, and therefore helps us not at all. Only Arcady and the Arcadians supply what we lack, and their sculpture marks the only sure road leading back to them.

It is well known that others have been before us in this conclusion. It is equally apparent that something is lacking in what they have built upon that substructure. Upon analysis it appears that they have seized upon the essential elements, but that instead of assimilating and adapting them in a way consistent with practical as well as aesthetic usefulness in our modern world, they adhere rigidly to the unanimated fixed forms of a dead civilization.

For example, one very conscientious student of classic Greek sculpture and its literature confesses her inability to do satisfactory work amid the material distractions of the bustling New World; but place her feet on the modern soil (for soil remains no more old than does the air) of ancient Greece and her inspiration soars. To be able daily to contemplate the ruins of the Parthenon is to find that inspiration daily renewed. She feels herself to be, in fact, one of those favored dancers who was patronized by Aspasia, whose movements were imitated by the thoughtful Socrates for the good of his health, and who, perhaps, danced as a model for the great Phidias. She is not of this age at all. She belongs to the past, in which she dwells as a shadow and whose

A sudden realization of calamity does not always, as in the case of grief, have a crushing effect upon the body—as this living semblance to sculpture indicates in its upward and backward thrust of torso, arms and head.

## *Our Debt to Classic Sculpture*

spirit she has not the power to restore as a living thing for the benefit of the multitudes who are able to dwell only in the present.

Another fixes her attention upon a sculptured joint or swelling muscle and extracts therefrom a new Principle in which is centered the secret of the True Art of Dancing as revealed by herself! "The secret consists in a condition of the muscles totally different from any realized by athletes since the time of the Greeks, a condition of *Tension*, which transforms dead weight into a living force, and which made the Greek as different from the modern human being as a stretched rubber band differs from a slack one. Ah, "tension," that long lost secret, which our modern athletes know nothing about! Yet you can't pick up a pin from the floor without muscular tension. Did you ever observe on the "gridiron" a Yale "Centre Rush" "set" himself to withstand the enemy's catapulting onslaught? That is muscular tension pure and simple. And two modern sciences—Anthropology and Archaeology—have long since disproved the sentimental theory that, except in manners and customs, the man of twenty-five, or even fifty, centuries ago differed from the man of to-day. The advantage, if any, is in favor of the Twentieth Century man. It should be sufficient to remind the reader that the distance covered by the classic Marathon runner—who, on delivering his message, dropped dead from exhaustion—is recorded, and that quite a number of our own modern "Marathon rac-

## *Our Debt to Classic Sculpture*

ers" have exceeded it without suffering any ill consequences.

It is characteristic for novices in art to be over-enthusiastic and to misconstrue the meagre records of times long past. Not long ago one ingenuous dancer secured wide publicity of her "discovery" that the secret of graceful and intelligent physical expression had been revealed to her in familiar bas relief effigies on ancient Egyptian coins and mummy cases—those grotesque profiles of hatchet faces and bodies all angles and sharp elbows. All one had to do in order to become the regenerator of dancing was faithfully to copy the lines and angles of those Egyptian effigies—which exhibited the old Egyptians as they really were, going about their business affairs and ceremonies! It is sufficient to mention the established historical fact that it was forbidden by the all-powerful priests under those dynasties to *portray* the human face or figure; all their painters and sculptors were permitted to do was to indicate them in profile with the stiff conventionality with which archaeology has made us familiar.

It is for us to avoid misconceptions of that kind. Doubtless they are made and promulgated in good faith, but ignorance is hardly the proper preparation for anyone who assumes the functions of a teacher. There is nothing mysterious or enigmatic about classic Greek sculpture. It speaks for itself, and its last word, after ideal beauty, is Truth.



**M**USIC: TWIN SISTER OF  
THE DANCE, SHARING ON  
EQUAL TERMS CREATION  
AND INTERPRETATION

A child dancer's spontaneous interpretation of music whose Spring-like character produces the reaction indicated—of being gently and lightly wafted along upon a breeze.

#### IV

### *Music: Twin Sister of the Dance*

**W**ITH respect to our restoration and modern development of the classic Greek dance, the case of music is very different from that of sculpture. It is different from any other viewpoint. The complete and symmetrical structure of the science and art of music which we in these times possess is a modern creation, compared with which the music of even the most enlightened peoples in the Fifth Century B. C. was like a charming little embowered Temple of Artemis placed beside the Cathedral of St. Marks in Venice. Yet the music of the ancient Greeks, ingenuous and undeveloped though it was, held fundamental truth and beauty that made of it the worthy twin sister of their dance. The development of poetry and oratory was on a par with that of sculpture, and from music those arts borrowed their perfect and varied rhythms, their effective cadences and their exalted mental images. Much of their poetry is preserved to us, and from it we learn how exquisite was their sense of rhythm. Their dancing and their acting—

Depicting the idea of the arrow's flight—in the dance a quick movement of the foot indicates the release of the bowstring; sharp, quick, decisive action.





## *Music: Twin Sister of the Dance*

their lyrical and dramatic representations—were combined in a single art, both designated by one Greek word. The dancer, without the aid of words, was expected to utilize all his powers of physical expression, all his mimetic ability, in portrayals from the epics and legends of his time; and often without the support of music in any form.

Music did not then, nor does it even now, possess any value as a medium for the expression of concrete ideas or images associated with nature or with the activities of human life. The naive notion is long since exploded that music is capable of definitely depicting the beauties of a summer sunrise or the horrors of a battle-field. That old fallacy was due to a misconception of the nature of the mental stimulus provided by manifestations of an art whose direct appeal is to the emotions only—and to the suggestion contained in the absurd statements formerly printed in concert programmes that such a number described a sunrise and such another number the battle of Austerlitz. Reading the programme, and while under the emotional influences of the music, no room was left for doubt!

But music does, always has and always will, more than any other single influence, perform the invaluable service of obliterating consciousness of self. The sum total of all the other inhibitions that stand in the way of truthful and convincing expression of mind or emotion do not equal the handicap of dominant self-conscious-

Showing the facility with which children form impromptu ensembles, as when music calls for a combination of individual interpretations.



*Music: Twin Sister of the Dance*

ness. It turns the mind inward upon itself, upon the body, the hands, the feet, the dress, evoking vanity or paralyzing with doubts and trepidations; the free mind that had the universe for its field of contemplation, and was capable of solving every finite problem, is enslaved to its unimportant envelope and can express nothing but inefficiency.

Good music almost instantly sets the mind free through its powerful action upon the emotions which belong to the sub-consciousness, the naked, potent ego constituting the real man or woman. Having accomplished this first essential, it marvellously stimulates the faculty of imagination. The mind leaps toward its ideal and its processes are clarified and quickened. Even the simple melodies played upon the primitive flute and the reed pipes of the Arcadians possessed these powers, for those melodies always contained rhythm and form; and it is rhythm and form more than harmony and color which, from the beginning, has bound music, poetry and dancing together in a union that is indissoluble.

For these reasons we should avail ourselves of every opportunity to listen to good music. We possess it in a volume so vast, with such enormous advantages of interpretation upon our perfected instruments and by the symphony orchestra, supplemented by widely distributed mechanical interpretations accessible to everybody, that music literally is almost as free as the air we breathe.

Drigo's Serenade—showing how modern music of this character inspires the creation of dance movements and figures adapted from the purest Greek models. The beginning of the interpretation is shown in the small plate.





## *Music: Twin Sister of the Dance*

Good music declares itself, not only in its wholesome appeal to the emotions but in the constructive mental stimulus it provides. Tempted by the very perfections of the modern orchestra, certain composers with the noblest creations standing to their credit have exhibited decadent tendencies which have unfortunately become fashionable with the *dillitante*. In striving for new color combinations and startling effects they have sacrificed rhythm, the very quality necessary to keep music sane and truly beautiful. The result is confusion to the senses and debilitating to the mind. It was the philosopher Nietzsche's discovery of this crime against music which influenced him to recant much of his years-long public praise of Wagner—after a single evening spent under the spell of the exquisite and varied rhythms of Bizet. Latterly Wagner had paralyzed his reasoning faculties; he declared that Bizet's rhythms and pure melodies instantly resuscitated his constructive powers.

In our modern adaptation of the ancient Greek ideal in dancing, music supplies us with never-failing sources of inspiration. It opens our natures to perception of the beautiful, enriches our faculty of imagery, compels movements of grace and meaning, molds our bodies into expressions of its own forms of beauty upon which our chastened conscious minds play with all the virtuosity we can command.

By way of fair exchange, consider what we give to music. The greatest composers have turned to the con-

Children in spontaneous reaction to the influence of a single chord of music,  
yet instinctively fusing their interpretations into a harmonious whole.

*Music: Twin Sister of the Dance*

ventional, artificial ballet for themes and inspiration. There exists a large volume of music thus conceived, and through it all you seem to see pirouettes on painfully pointed toes, rigidly corseted waists and meaningless mechanical smiles. The music created under the influence of our dancing, the volume of which is steadily increasing, reveals no such ugly skeletons; it is as graceful and charming and spontaneous as are the gracious qualities of Nature herself.

Right here it seems well to point out, in its relation to classic dancing, a discovery about music which we have applied with the happiest results—results which are fundamental in their value, and which the minutiae of an arbitrary and rigid technique are powerless to produce. Reverting to the extraordinary power of good music in freeing and developing the subconsciousness, we wish now to go a step farther and declare that in its influence upon physical expression the unimpeded operation of the subconsciousness will produce instinctive postures, gestures and naturally graceful movements which not only clearly and adequately express the mood and embody the mental image but more than equal the effects of the highest art based upon a mechanical technique. It is obvious that this must be so, for the reason that the eurythmics of the ancient Greeks were developed by just this means. Their natures were open not alone to the influence of music but to every element of beauty entering into their lives. All these elements united to lend beauty to their

Impromptu crisp, dainty, capricious reaction of a very young dancer to a pizzacato movement of the orchestra—hardly to be improved by repeated practise.



### *Music: Twin Sister of the Dance*

bodies and their minds. Eurythmics became the technical basis of their art of dancing, but the source was the beautiful in nature and not the mechanics, the mathematics, of a technical art.

We ourselves do not rely wholly upon music for the purpose indicated. Serene contemplation of a charming landscape, of white clouds floating under a turquoise sky, of flowers, of trees, of shady groves beside rippling streams, the same as with the Arcadians, will obliterate consciousness of self and liberate the real understanding and creative ego. It is simply that music is the most complete, most accessible single influence of this sort of which we have any knowledge—besides the constant usefulness of its definite rhythms and image-producing character.

The most distinguished and successful modern attempt to combine these principles with technical training of mind and body is represented in the Eurythmics of Jaques-Dalcroze. We must admire and esteem the achievements of this great genius among educators, even if we do not agree that his methods with respect to dancing are an improvement upon our own, for his system is applied most happily to education in a larger field. Primarily, Jaques-Dalcroze is a musician and composer. He is a teacher by grace of his discovery that physical action marked and governed by the rhythms of music stimulated a deeper mental grasp of various subjects than could be gained in the usual ways. Of his philosophy

Both of these Bacchante figures exhibit original interpretations in which beauty of line is sustained in connection with appropriate gestures and facial expression.





## *Music: Twin Sister of the Dance*

Professor M. E. Sadler, of the University of Leeds, writes:

"The system of exercises known as Rhythmic gymnastics is based upon two ideas, (1) time is shown by movements of the arms, (2) time-values—note-duration—by movements of the feet and body. In the early stages of the training this principle is clearly observed, later it may be varied in many ingenious ways, for instance in what is known as plastic counterpoint, where the actual notes played are represented by movements of the arms, while the counterpoint in crotchets, quavers or semi-quavers, is given by the feet. . . . When the movements corresponding to the notes from the crotchet to the whole note of twelve beats have, with all their details, become a habit, the pupil need only make them mentally, contenting himself with one step forward. This step will have the exact length of the whole note, which will be mentally analyzed into its various elements. Although these elements are not individually performed by the body, their images and the innervations suggested by those images take the place of the movements. . . . The whole training aims at developing the power of rapid physical reaction to mental impressions." \*

\* Full justice to the Jacques-Dalcroze system seems to call for this additional quotation from the same writer: "Another part of the work is to teach the pupils to express the type of music that is being played; this is technically known as 'Plastic expression.' The alphabet of this consists of twenty gestures with the arms, which can be done in many various combinations and in various positions, and by means of these any kind of emotion can be expressed."

### *Music: Twin Sister of the Dance*

We may perceive from the foregoing that the Jaques-Dalcroze system is useful both in making sound musicians and in teaching rhythmical physical expression; but it is apparent that the advantage is much greater in the former than in the latter case—as, indeed, is intended. For the musician, the composer, an elaborate technique is essential. They are concerned with something that does not exist in nature; they are creators through the medium of an art having mathematical values for its foundation, and the ingredients for whose finished and compelling charm are always calculated. They interpret, too, but not as we do; their instruments—except the human voice—are purely mechanical, while we know and play upon but one—our sentient human body, within which the soul and the mind dwell, enlivening and actuating all its movements and expressions.

We dance in time to the rhythms of the music which inspire our interpretations; but music, above all, relaxes mind, muscles and nerves, enabling them to receive and physically express the images of beauty and grace which it so mysteriously evokes. Listening to music makes us superior to the needs of an elaborate mechanical technique.

**H**EALTH: THE PRICELESS  
RESULT OF REGULAR AND  
AGREEABLE EXERCISE OF  
MIND AND BODY

A creative adaptation upon the classic Greek model which suggests achievement of the cloud-veiled summit of that ideal.



## *Our Contribution to Health*

**I**T is mainly from those cherished relics—single figures, groups, and friezes for the embellishment of Hellenic architecture—that we gain the knowledge which enables us to reconstruct the classic Greek dance, and to convince ourselves that it, as well, has never been excelled. In this task—which is literally a labor of love—we see more and more clearly that we are pursuing the highest hygienic ideal. The spirit of Health breathes in every inspiration and movement of the Greek Dance. But for the anachronism of associating one of the later deities with one of the original Greek pantheon we should be justified in the impression that Terpsichore, Goddess of the Dance, enjoyed the full confidence and counsel of Hygeia, Goddess of Health.

Happily, here we are in direct accord with the most advanced modern science. It is an axiom of physiology that rational—that is enjoyable, pleasurable—exercise of mind and body is the only single thing that can be depended upon to promote and maintain the condition

The ocean beach, upon which the surf rolls rhythmically, or is broken upon half submerged rocks, incites to the most open free and vital dancing expression.





## *Our Contribution to Health*

of health. In the face of such a direct and simple method, what an extraordinary waste of time and energy is comprehended in the complicated structure of rules and regulations prescribed by Science for hygienic living! The chemistry of food, the balanced ration—so much protein in such ratio with carbohydrate, and so on, and so on; the intricacies of digestion and metabolism; in short, the elaborately worked out assumption that our poor finite minds are capable both of understanding and directing the operations of the most marvellous of laboratories, Nature's own—what a monument to squandered intelligence! All we have to do is to keep our minds and bodies normal by a natural way of living; Nature can be trusted to carry on her own processes. Regular and sufficient exercise in the open air maintains the efficiency of those processes. Normal appetite is the instinct which selects needful food and limits the amount consumed. Overeating is the result, as well as a cause, of lack of health. With natural living, needful sleep and bathing and clothing are secured instinctively. Rational exercise simply and agreeably solves the whole problem of health.

Of all systems of health-giving exercise, dancing as it ought to be is, from every viewpoint, the most desirable. We have endeavored to show that this means dancing developed from the Greek model. It is significant that the draperies of most of the sculptured Greek dancers seem blown by the wind. We have many rea-

Reacting to the breath of Spring—the most compelling of all impulses to dance, and provocative of the most joyous physical expression.







## *Our Contribution to Health*

sons for believing that dancing in its classic purity was nearly always in that temple roofed by the blue sky and floored by the green earth, decorated with living streams and shady groves. Here the first attribute of health was assured—serenity of mind. The Greek passion for the beauty of symmetry eliminated all forms of exercise calculated to develop one part of the body at the expense of the others. They adored strength, but abhorred muscle in disproportion. Strength with grace was their ideal, and this they gained with the greatest certainty through the rhythmical movements of their dance.

In our revival of dancing in its purest form we find all these theories amply borne out. Although we have not, at least in the same degree, the serene repose of mind and spirit which the ancient Greeks possessed as a heritage, we find that the habitual practice of dancing as they danced has a happy tendency to overcome any such deficiency. With our mercurial temperament we are able to add a certain gayety which, evidently, was not in their character; but it is, nevertheless, health-inspiring of itself, while broadening our powers of interpretation.

Not only health, but alertness of mind and general physical efficiency are the reward of truly beautiful dancing. Such a dancer walks like a superior being, surrounded by an atmosphere of personal triumph. Whatever the kind of work she does, it is performed with such economy of physical effort that her body hardly feels the poisons of fatigue. Having the soundest of health, she

Representing joyous abandonment to an impulse of Nature's gently persuasive mood—as of floating forward borne upon a Summer breeze.





## *Our Contribution to Health*

is never handicapped by the inhibitions of depressed spirits. Efficient in dancing as dancing ought to be, and will be, she is efficient in all else she undertakes—according to her natural endowment of ability.

In considering the details which enter into this health consummation, these are important: The vital organs of this ideally normal being are not strangled by corsets laced up to the last notch—any form of stays, in fact, are prohibited as ridiculous. Toes are not dislocated in efforts to compel them to bear the body's entire weight; the effect of buoyancy is more effectively produced by graceful and natural poising of the body upon the ball of the foot. Neither are the feet, with their axis a straight line from the attachment of the Achilles tendon to the ball of the great toe, forced outward to form a grotesque right angle to their natural position—a torturing and injurious strain to the whole extremity to the height of the knee and a positive menace to the general health.

Nature designed every part of our bodies for use, and it is use in a natural manner that sustains health and vitality. In our revival of the dancing ideal which conforms to this law the feet and lower limbs are no more important than are other members of the body, except that they bear the burden of the body's weight. The arms, the hands, the chest, the neck, the head—all are employed at every moment, and never singly nor arbitrarily. The chest is expanded, the droop taken out of

Arms outstretched, and raised together, in movements which avoid unaesthetic angles, even in the energetic action shown on the left. The open, raised bust in the large figure illustrates the hygienic value of adhering to the heart centre of all true physical expression.







## *Our Contribution to Health*

the shoulders; and with the raising of the chest in expansion the abdomen is automatically drawn in and held in place by the revitalized and strengthened broad ligament—and all fatiguing pressure is taken off the sensitive lower part of the back, where those delicate and important organs, the kidneys, are located.

Health: "A sound mind in a sound body." Hygeia was its goddess. The more we dwell upon the subject the more we are inclined to believe that Hygeia must have been the tutor of Terpsichore, as well as her sister deity!

In a previous chapter dealing with the unhygienic tyranny of conventional clothing we have quoted some admirable conclusions by Lieutenant Mueller, the celebrated physical expert of the Danish Army whose advice and personal training has been sought by many famous men and women. Perhaps with deeper insight and wider experience than are manifested by any other living authority, Lieutenant Mueller seems perfectly to actualize that axiom of Lord Bacon:

"There is wisdom in this beyond the rules of physic. A man's own observation, what he finds good of and what he finds hurt of, is the best physic to preserve health."

Through actual experience he finds "hurt of" clothes, and he finds healthful "good of" natural exercise in the open air, even under a blazing sun, to a degree that makes of medicine a useless invention. Our philosophy

A gentle and pleasantly expectant expression of aspiration—the lines of the entire body, arms, neck and head, having an upward tendency.





## *Our Contribution to Health*

and practice of dancing are in perfect agreement with the precepts of this expert. In the way of exercise he gives running the highest place. We have the best of reasons to applaud this judgment, inasmuch as Lieutenant Mueller is not a dancer; for is not running an important element of all dancing founded upon the classic model? For health, our exercise of dancing includes his favorite exercise of running and adds to it not only every possible natural and graceful movement of the body and limbs but also the invaluable motive of definite and complete physical self-expression.

In these days of sun parlors and almost perfect systems of ventilation, all exercise becomes virtually open air exercise. In case weather conditions make it uncomfortable to be out of doors, there is no longer hardly any excuse for subjecting one's self to the evil influences of poisonous air.\* It is therefore simply ignorance and neglect—which doubtless some day will be de-

\* Therefore, we, even more than Mueller, are entitled to believe as he writes: "Fresh air being not only the preventive, but also the cure, of most diseases, it is surely the most powerful factor in promoting longevity. There is and always has been a good deal of speculation as to the length of man's life, as originally intended by Nature, and opinions as to the allotted span range between eighty and one hundred and forty years. There can be no doubt that the latter number is more nearly correct. If a man, from his birth upwards, lived under perfect hygienic conditions, senile decay could not possibly begin until he was nearing an age of one hundred and fifty years. Evidence in support of this is negative; in the face of the inexorable law, that every cause has its effect, it cannot be accepted that all the different hygienic offenses ought not to have any shortening influence on a man's age. The most common hygienic offense of which we all, without exception, are, or have been, guilty, is that of breathing tainted air. Here apparently is the chief cause of our too-limited existence. Every tissue and every nerve has been, therefore, inoculated with some kind of poison, and has lost entirely its power of resistance and its faculty of existence. . . . Nietzsche was certainly correct when he declared that the meanness of life of our present generation, and its lack of ability to live, was attributable to our 'musty store and cellar air.'"

All true physical expression has its generative centre in the region of the heart, the same as the emotions which actuate it. Movements flowing from any other source are aesthetically futile.







## *Our Contribution to Health*

clared criminal—which accounts for normally born persons missing the joys of life because of easily avoided insignificant ailments. The whole idea is far from new. Two centuries ago Dryden wrote:

Better to hunt in fields for health unbought  
Than fee the doctor for a nauseous draught.  
The wise for cure on exercise depend;  
God never made his work for man to mend.

And Thomas Gray, of about the same period, picturing the healthy man:

From toil he wins his spirits light,  
From busy day the peaceful night;  
Rich, from the very want of wealth,  
In heaven's best treasures, peace and health.

While Thomson, word-painter of the most exquisite landscapes that exist in English poetry, might almost be suspected of being a classic Greek dancer, writing thus:

I care not, Fortune, what you me deny:  
You cannot rob me of free Nature's grace,  
You cannot shut the windows of the sky  
Through which Aurora shows her brightening face;  
You cannot bar my constant feet to trace  
The woods and lawns, by living stream, at eve:  
Let health my nerves and finer fibres brace,  
And I their toys to the great children leave:  
Of fancy, reason, virtue, naught can me bereave.

And, as though to give the subject its final word:

Health is the vital principle of bliss,  
And exercise, of health.

The Greek dancer alone, in all the world filled with people who practise some form of that art either for gain

## *Our Contribution to Health*

or for recreation, fully justifies her right to the God-given upright position. Whatever postures or movements are demanded in her dancing creations or interpretations, the intervals, however brief, are always marked by an instant return to the erect, full-bosomed poise representing *aspiration*.

This habit of aspiring to the skies tends always to develop powers of mind and qualities of soul which are the most potent of all producers of health of body. The grovelling mind dwells in a flabby, cringing envelope incapable of resisting the evils that are ever ready to attack it, either from within or without. The bodies of the mentally deficient are always defective. But when the mind is alert and the spirit uplifted by the joy of physical participation in any of the aesthetic activities of civilized existence, continuous health of the normal body—barring accident—is assured.

We believe that we are warranted in the assertion that no known means of attaining this ideal condition equals the dance as we practise it.

**H**APPINESS: HEALTH PLUS  
KNOWING AND LIVING  
THE THINGS THAT ARE  
SERENELY BEAUTIFUL

A modern Aurora on a misty morning dancing with dew-laden ferns. The Greek dancer's vital body, though lightly draped, is proof against such slight discomforts.

## VI

### *Dancing Back to Arcady*

**A**LL that we have stated or quoted thus far bears directly upon the subject of our dancing. Our division of the general subject under such heads as Clothes, Sculpture, Music, Health, is to give emphasis to the importance of those elements. They are not to be dissociated from the practice of dancing according to the classic model. And this brings us to the element which is chief of them all—Happiness. For, besides being the greatest desire of humanity, happiness includes all of Health, much of Music, something of Sculpture, and is in perpetual warfare with the tyrant, Clothes. In dancing with us, who ignore Fashion for draperies that are graceful and adequate, you are delivering a mortal blow at that tyrant while pursuing the direct road to the goal of happiness. Happiness does not consist merely in being a spectator; it is in doing and living the things that are beautiful. Marcus Aurelius put it this way:

“The happiness and unhappiness of the rational, social animal depends not on what he feels but on what

Bacchante. Showing the moment of lustful anticipation of delight in the intoxicating product of the fruit—as though hardly to be restrained from seizing and devouring at once.







## *Dancing Back to Arcady*

he does; just as his virtue and vice consist not in feeling but in doing."

When you dance with us you will "do" something which will give you a new understanding of at least two of the choicest gems in the poetry of Keats:

Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

And this other:

A thing of beauty is a joy forever;  
Its loveliness increases; it will never  
Pass into nothingness.

Now poets, of course, are endowed with a very exceptional capacity for perceiving and knowing beauty. The majority of human kind are comparatively undeveloped in this regard, and their capacity for happiness is correspondingly restricted. This is mainly because they do not habitually do and live the things that are beautiful. A fully developed aesthetic sense is not to be gained by the mere spectator; he must have a consciousness of participation, and in some way he must express that consciousness. We cannot all be creative geniuses—poets, sculptors, painters, composers of music; but all of us who are normal beings can learn to actively respond to the influences which they exert, especially the influence of music.

Young children usually are considered to be simply "little animals." But watch them in the presence of some powerful manifestation of beauty. What child

An expression of pleasurable relaxation pervading the entire body—a complete reaction to influences that are pervasive in their sweetness and charm.





## *Dancing Back to Arcady*

does not almost instantly respond, both physically and psychically, to that masterpiece of Nature, a perfect morning in June? The small boy tears off the hated shoes and stockings and races with joyous whoops over the cool greensward. The little girl shows her longing to follow him; she is only restrained by the conventions with which so many mothers oppress the souls and bodies of their feminine offspring. But her breast heaves, her eyes sparkle: she lets herself go to the limit of the sense of freedom left in her, and now and then there is one whose actions declare her to be in open revolt. She doesn't care! Let them call her a "tomboy" if they like! Off come *her* shoes and stockings, her hat, her apron—every article of clothing she can modestly dispense with—and away she goes! She is *expressing her sense of beauty* and developing her capacity for happiness. And from that cause will spring a contented and useful woman.\*

And music. What normal child ever is seen to assume a detached attitude toward music which conveys

\* Here, again, the author omits what her editor considers would be an interesting and valuable personal application. In one of a series of magazine articles bearing her signature she writes: "To tell you how I became interested in, absorbed by, the Greek dance, it will be necessary for me to depart briefly from my habit and become personal. I am a western girl and spent my childhood in the freedom of the western prairies. I shocked my family and our neighbors by running about barefoot. It wasn't a bad habit, but a very good one. All women would be healthier and more graceful if they bared their feet when in their own homes. I ran and played and tumbled with hunting dogs. They were pointers. How naturally graceful were all their movements! I have never had to unlearn what they taught me." The studious reader of the connected essays on classic Greek dancing which form the text of this book will, perhaps, find in the personal experience just described sufficient warrant for the author's repeated assertions that cultivation of the impulse to dance is more important and should precede any effort to acquire a mechanical technique.—Ed.

The race, adapted from the classic Greek games, is useful in dance interpretations combining grace and swiftness of movement. The silhouettes compare fantastic with natural grace of movement.







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any sense of rhythm? You see at once that telltale livening of the eye, a spiritual exaltation reflected in the countenance, and soon the whole body begins to react to this special influence of beauty; the child is *living* that thing of beauty and creating more beauty—for she is dancing! In virtually the same way her body and her soul had reacted, and she had become a component part of the beauty of that perfect morning in June. Children are rarely outsiders; they do and live the things that are beautiful.

Herein is the lesson: Because the passing of years oppresses us with the thought that we are no longer children is not material, so long as we retain health and a certain amount of vigor; all we have to do is to destroy consciousness of self—health and vigor, and a restored receptivity will do the rest.

In our dancing according to the classic model, which makes of the body an instrument for the expression of all thought and emotion, there is a fundamental principle which we call “opening and closing,” or “folding and unfolding.” The latter, perhaps, is the more expressive. At the approach of danger, or when the emotion is the reverse of pleasurable from any cause, the body—the whole nature of the dancer—folds inward upon itself, as though shrinking from or denying the thing to which it is passively, or even actively antagonistic. If the emotion be pleasurable the body expresses it in a manner exactly the contrary; the whole nature, now

Here a young dancer's interpretative impulse is actuated by the motion of the ocean's waves—an example of the emotions profoundly stirred by manifestations of Nature.

## *Dancing Back to Arcady*

joyously giving or receiving, unfolds—as the petals of a flower unfold to receive the warmth of the sun and to give forth the wealth of its perfume. Children, in the physical expression of their emotions, adhere to this principle instinctively. That is because they lack self-consciousness. This statement is proved by the well known facility children have for play-acting, for interpreting characters not their own. The illusion furnished by their “make believe” is almost perfect, for themselves as well as for the beholder. Only the born histrionic genius is more capable of utterly forgetting self. Superiority, in fact, lies on the side of the children, for in the adult actor, however versatile he may be, the effect is more apt to be calculated, the result of long-practised technique, than a consequence of perfect self-submergence.

This quality of childhood which unites ingenuousness with such natural versatility in portrayal is one that we cultivate most assiduously in our practice and teaching of dancing. It is our chief aid in realizing the all-important ideal of getting back to Arcady. If we are able to “make believe” that we are Arcadians, presto! to all intents and purposes we *are* Arcadians, and proceed to do as the Arcadians did.

The very moment in which that mental transformation is achieved one enters into possession of a repertory of characterizations the most poetic conceivable and covering the whole field of idyllic emotion and action.

The idea of Pan inspires the Greek dancer with a charming variety of interpretations of a lyrical, as well as of a sprightly and mischievous, character.





## *Dancing Back to Arcady*

In their greater and lesser deities and the earth-born children of their gods and goddesses the ancient Greeks personified every attribute of Nature, every human ambition and activity. To them these beings were real, as actual as themselves. That they were not visible to mortal eyes served still further to exalt and permanently establish them, and to increase the potency of the spell which they exercised over all minds. What an advantage they held, still hold, over the frankly fictitious characters of our modern novels and dramas, the most heroic or charming of which seem to live for a day, then to gradually fade into the mists of memory!

Those ever-living creations of the classic Greek poets supplied every variant of interpretative inspiration of which the ancient Greek dancer felt the need. That was their task—to impersonate, to interpret the attributes of the immortal heroes and heroines of Olympus and to portray the lives and deeds of their children of earthly birth whose names sprinkle the pages of Homer and Virgil; and, in lighter vein, to depict the sports and loves of the humbler, happier creatures of the streams and woodland glades. That, too, is our most agreeable and beneficial task. For the advantage of self-submergence in a series of definite and inspiring characters cannot be over-estimated, and for us who dance the ideal characters are these immortal creatures of Arcady.

The moment you enter into the characters of an ancient Greek Nymph or Naiad, daughter of a River God,

Woodland interpretation. The ocean-born Aphrodite being adorned by Goddesses of the Seasons for her first appearance among her peers on Olympus.







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you are emancipated from all that reminds you of the environment of your modern conventional existence. Your body no longer is the slave of Fashion. It is draped, not clothed. These draperies—merely a filmy envelope for the body—offer no restraint to the freest movement of any member, and they add, rather than detract as clothes do, to the body's grace and beauty. Perhaps you have a scarf, so light that it is the sport of every zephyr. This gracious freedom of the body is symbolical of all that enters into your idyllic life—your poetic sylvan environment, your ignorance of the meaning of such words as care or worry. You are a creature whose birthright is pure joy. Ordinary mortals walk; *you* dance. Of course—how can you help dancing? Now, throwing aside your scarf, you join a group of sister nymphs who are bathing in the sunlit stream. The rustling of the reeds on the bank is music in your ears. It blends with distant strains from the pipes of Pan. Presently you demonstrate that your shapely limbs are made for running as well as dancing. Startled by the approach of a mischievous young faun, you leave the stream and, seizing your scarf, run from his presence with the speed and grace of Atalanta herself. But it is only sport after all, for the fauns, the dryads, the naiads, are all daughters and sons of the deities of woods and streams, your fellow creatures of this happy sylvan world.

It is Autumn. The leaves are turning, the harvest is over and the vintage is on. Green leaves are entwined

### *Dancing Back to Arcady*

in your tresses—you are a Bacchante. You owe tribute of devotion to Dionysos, god of wine, whom the Romans called Bacchus. But as you are in the character of a bacchante of the classic period, the revels are not unseemly. You do not become intoxicated with wine, only mildly exhilarated. Ruthless satyrs and the gross Silenus came later when the Golden Age had passed from twilight into total darkness. You press out the purple grapes with your feet. You carry large bunches of the fruit in your hands, and you bear gracefully upon one shoulder, supported by the upraised arm, vessels brimming with the generous new vintage. As Dionysos represented the social and beneficent influences of the vintage, all your fellow creatures of the woods and streams are there— young fauns girdled with skins, trophies of the chase; Pan, discoursing sweet music on his pipes; sister bacchantes innumerable, and mortals old and young, for pressing the grapes and storing the wine is the serious business of mortals. It may be that Artemis—Diana of the Romans—lends her chaste beauty to the scene for a moment, returning with her nymphs and dogs from the chase. Perhaps Ares—the Roman Mars—god of war and half-brother to Dionysos, may pause in passing to doff his plumed helmet in honor of the occasion—in which event it would be reasonable to expect the presence of Aphrodite, also!

And it all means dancing. Dancing as we dance provides the only adequate visioning forth of the classic

## *Dancing Back to Arcady*

activities of Arcady. And when we dance with our actual selves transformed into living embodiments of these fabled, yet immortal beings, our feet are upon the straight highway leading to our ultimate goal—creative adaptation of classic Greek dancing to the aesthetic and hygienic needs of our own time.

Greek dancing, as we practise and teach it, means infinitely more than the most faithful mere imitation of that very ancient art. It is a philosophy of living and doing which contains beneficent precepts available for the personal application of every human being. To be emancipated from the drag of ill health, or the dread of it; to be able laughingly to defy that curse of our very modern social life, neurasthenia; to smilingly face old age with every nerve still tingling with the joy of living; to know all beauty, not merely as a spectator but as an active participant—are not these real benefits, well worth seizing even from the hands of a "Greek dancer"? Greek games also are within the Greek dancer's province. They will develop into Graeco-American games—more enticing, perhaps, to the masculine mind, and comprehending the same advantages. Truly, Arcady is a blessed land. Why not, everyone, say proudly with the poet Goethe: "I also was born in Arcady?" And add, with yet more significance: "And in Arcady henceforth shall I dwell."













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